

Colonial American Arts and Humanities

Lesson Plans and Activities

Prepared by the

Muses of Independence

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Unit Introduction

Colonial American Arts and Humanities is one of a series of teaching units developed by participants in the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative's Teaching American History Grant. The group, known as the "Muses of Independence," created this unit to provide a series of interactive lessons that will hopefully bring elements of colonial history alive for their students. Our teaching unit is an outgrowth of the 2006 TAH Summer Institute and our participation in a Colonial Williamsburg Teacher's Institute. The lessons within the unit incorporate a variety of materials including primary sources, photographs, video files, audio recordings, paintings, books, and articles. The lessons are designed to deal with the multiple intelligences and various learning styles of your students.

This unit focuses on the arts and humanities of colonial and revolutionary Virginia. While individual lessons deal with such topics as music, dance, or architecture, teachers can and hopefully will use the lessons to show the connections to larger issues such as slavery, the contrasts and relations between different social classes and groups, and the struggle for independence. By studying colonial arts and humanities, students become aware of the similarities and differences between the lives of 21st century Americans and their 17th and 18th century counterparts. We hope the lessons allow students a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the people who lived it and have fun doing so. The activities encourage students to analyze sources and synthesize the information in their own projects. The lessons are intended as a supplement to customary course materials for eighth grade social studies classes.

The lessons within this unit are designed to complement each other as an introduction to the colonial arts, but each lesson stands independently of the others. The individual teacher may determine the order in which the lessons are used.

Just for Fun? Arts and Entertainment in Colonial Virginia is a moviemaker project intended for use as an introduction to colonial recreations. The movie is divided into three sections that deal with different aspects of colonial culture: music, dance, and games. Teacher and student resources for the lesson include a viewing worksheet and an open response question.

Another lesson deals with colonial architecture. The lesson combines a review of various element of art from the Kentucky Core Content with evolution of architecture from pre-colonial times through the revolutionary period. A power point presentation is used to provide the lesson content to the students. Many images of Jamestown and Williamsburg are used in the presentation.

Colonial Dance is an experiential exercise with students performing dance and focuses on two contrasting styles of dance that appealed to different colonial cultural groups. Rhythm, time, force, and movement are among the topics dealt with in the lesson. Also, students will learn how dance reflects cultures and time periods. Teacher and student resources for the

lesson include music from an audio compact disc, diagrams for the dances, and an open response item.

The events of the turbulent years prior to the American Revolution are examined in our lesson dealing with political cartoons. The lesson reinforces students understanding of art elements and certain art terminology. The lesson focuses on the varying viewpoints of British subjects on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and includes a power point presentation, as well as numerous student and teacher resources. Students conclude the lesson by creating their own political cartoons.

Events and leaders of the American Revolution are examined in the lesson entitled *Yankee Doodle* that emphasizes the ways music can be used as a means of reflecting political and social and attitudes. Students will listen to various songs that reflect a certain event or time period. The teacher will explain the historical contexts and events to which the songs refer. Resources for the lesson include music audio compact discs and several fact sheets concerning people and events of the American Revolution. Students end the lesson by working together in cooperative groups to create their own stanzas to be sung to the tune of *Yankee Doodle*.

The Fighting Ground, a young adult novel by Avi, is the topic of the last lesson plan. The book is very adaptable to most classrooms. Students enjoy its fast pace and suspense. Items included in the unit include two reading-for-meaning exercises and other resources.

Hopefully, you will find that these lessons provide variety and spice to the teaching of the colonial and revolutionary period. We hope that your students will find these lesson plans exciting and stimulating, but most of all, an engaging method of learning.